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COMMUTING

Getting there



SACRAMENTO BEE / PAUL KITAGAKI JR.

Ben Andrews accepted an internship at Intel Corp.'s Folsom campus in part because of the incentives offered to employees who commute by bicycle. Intel was named the best Fortune 500 workplace for commuters by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Intel, HP rank high for commuter consciousness

**By Clint Swett
Bee Staff Writer**

The ability to bike to work wasn't the only reason Ben Andrews took a six-month internship at Intel Corp.'s campus in Folsom.

But it helped to tip the scales.

"I really like the health benefits, and I haven't put gas in my truck in more than a month," said Andrews, who applied to work in Folsom after a stint at Intel's facility in Portland, Ore.

Andrews and thousands of other Intel workers take advantage of the commuting options the company offers.

Those options, offered at Intel sites around the country, earned the company the No. 1 spot in the Environmental Protection Agency rankings of Fortune 500 companies that are the best workplaces for commuters.

"It doesn't cost us a lot, and the benefits are fewer cars on campus and employees who are less frustrated than solo drivers."

Mark Pettinger
Intel spokesman



The rankings, which will be released today, show that 92 percent of Intel workers nationwide have access to commute options such as car pooling, bike lockers, showers and stations to power up electric cars.

"It's a boost to the entire (Highway) 50 corridor to have its largest employer as a model for commuter-friendly workplaces," said Rebecca Garrison, executive director of the 50 Corridor Transportation Management Association, in an e-mail.

Hewlett-Packard, which offers commute options to 53 percent of its workers, including those in Roseville, was ranked No. 11.

Best for commuters

The Environmental Protection Agency ranked Fortune 500 companies friendliest to commuters. Rankings are based on percentage of workers with access to alternatives to solo commuting. Intel Corp., which has 6,000 workers in Folsom, took the top spot.

1. Intel Corp., 92 percent with access
2. Fannie Mae, 78 percent
3. Cisco Systems Inc., 77 percent
4. USAA, 65
5. Sun Microsystems Inc., Oracle Corp. (tie), 60
7. Advanced Micro Devices Inc., 59
8. Texas Instruments Inc., 58
9. Safeco Corp., 55
10. EMC Corp., 54
11. Hewlett-Packard Co., 53
12. Apple Computer Inc., 51
13. Devon Energy Corp., 49
14. Nike Inc., 48
15. Reliant Energy Inc., 45
16. International Business Machines Corp., 44
17. Wyeth, 38
18. Wellpoint Health Networks Inc., 37
19. Dynegy Inc., 32
20. El Paso Corp., 31

Source: EPA

Although Intel and HP have the lofty rankings, there are plenty of other commute-conscious employers in the region, said Nancy Kays, a transportation planner for the Sacramento Area Council of Governments.

In all, about 45 local companies and government agencies - employing about 70,000 workers - have received the EPA designation of best workplaces for commuters.

To get that recognition, companies have to meet a long list of requirements such as subsidizing some employee transit expenses, offering telecommuting options, and offering secure bike storage.

HP and other companies have encouraged car-pooling to meet government ordinances calling for traffic reduction.

But Kays said companies often do not receive any direct financial incentive to encourage commuting, other than to help them find and retain workers.

That is part of what motivates Intel to provide such services, said company spokesman Mark Pettinger. "We try to give people the options to manage their lives better," he said. "It doesn't cost us a lot, and the benefits are fewer cars on campus and employees who are less frustrated than solo drivers."

Among that group is Catherine Marcey, a hardware engineer who bikes the two miles to Intel every day with her husband, Joel. "It's more than the health benefits. I find I'm more frustrated when I drive. And (biking and driving) take about the same amount of time," she said.

Bill Zlomke, who car-pools to Intel from his home in Granite Bay, said he likes the companionship of the drive and the preferred parking he gets with his car-pool pass.



Intel hardware engineer Catherine Marcey and her husband, Joel, commute two miles by bicycle to their jobs at Intel's Folsom campus. "I find I'm more frustrated when I drive," Catherine Marcey said. "And (biking and driving) take about the same amount of time."

That pays off at lunch hour when he and three or four other co-workers jump in his car near the front door and drive to a nearby restaurant. "When you fly," he said, "they buy."

In addition to providing special car-pool parking, Intel has an internal Web site and database to match drivers with riders. Like HP, it also has showers on site for bicyclists, cafeterias on site to cut down on food runs, plenty of telecommuting options and rides home if the job keeps a worker late.

"We see it as an employee benefit and an environmental responsibility," said HP spokeswoman Brigida Bergkamp.

Indeed, traffic congestion is increasingly seen as an environmental and financial burden. According to 2002 numbers provided by the EPA, Sacramentans driving during peak periods use an extra 60 gallons of gas a year.

Reducing the number of trips is the most efficient way to cut traffic congestion, wrote the 50 Corridor's Garrison in her e-mail. "We can build HOV (high-occupancy vehicle) lanes all day long, but without an active effort to organize and incentivize car pools and van pools, an HOV lane is just another chunk of asphalt."

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